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UNCLAS TUNIS 001458

SIPDIS

STATE FOR E (AMBASSADOR GROSS,) EB, EB/CIP, NEA/MAG
(LAWRENCE,) NEA/PPR AND EB/CBA
COMMERCE FOR ITA/MAC/ONE (ROTH,) CLDP (TEJTEL,) AND
ADVOCACY CENTER (JAMES)
USUN GENEVA (WSIS WATCHER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOT REACTION TO ICANN POLICY; WSIS RELATED ISSUES:
COMMUNICATION MINISTER SAYS U.S. VISIT SUCCESSFUL

1. THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH GOT MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES MONTASSAR OUAILI JULY 6 TO DISCUSS THE COMMERCE DEPARTMENT'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DECISION TO RETAIN OVERSIGHT AND VETO POWER ON THE INTERNET CORPORATION FOR ASSIGNED NAMES AND NUMBERS (ICANN.) OUAILI WAS LESS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FACT OF USG OVERSIGHT OF ICANN, WHICH THE GOT HAS NO PROBLEM WITH, BUT WAS CONCERNED THAT THE U.S. AND EU REACH SOME KIND OF CONSENSUS ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET STANDARDS--AND DO THIS BEFORE THE SUMMIT. HE SAID THERE WAS CONCERN THAT IF THE U.S. PURSUES AN INDEPENDENT POSITION IN RELATION TO THE INTERNET, IT WOULD DAMAGE COMMON INTERESTS AND NEEDLESSLY CREATE COMPETING INTERNET STANDARDS.

2. OUAILI ALSO RECAPPED HIS RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON, CHICAGO, AND SAN FRANCISCO TO DISCUSS WSIS, AND ENCOURAGE U.S. PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION. IN WASHINGTON, OUAILI MET WITH EB/AMBASSADOR GROSS, AND THROUGHOUT THE TRIP WITH SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. HE SAID THE TRIP WAS "VERY SUCCESSFUL," AND HE EXPECTED HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATIONS FROM INTEL, CISCO, SUN, MOTOROLA, IBM, AND HP AT A MINIMUM FOR WSIS, WHICH WILL BE HELD IN TUNISIA IN NOVEMBER 2005. HE SAID ORGANIZERS NOW EXPECT MORE THAN 18,000 PEOPLE TO ATTEND.

3. AS HE HAS DONE PREVIOUSLY, OUAILI EMPHASIZED THAT WSIS WOULD BE AN INCLUSIVE GATHERING, BUT THAT HE WOULD LIKE U.S. HELP TO MAKE SURE THAT THE NEXT WORKING GROUP MEETING IN GENEVA BE FOCUSED ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES, AND NOT DIGRESS INTO A FORUM FOR CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF TUNISIA'S CIVIL SOCIETY ISSUES. MINISTER OUAILI STATED THAT DURING THE LAST PREPCOM MEETING, THE DELEGATION WAS "OVERDOSED" ON QUESTIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THAT EACH CIVIL SOCIETY GATHERING HELD DURING THE MEETINGS FOCUSED ON TUNISIA. THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT IN AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT, CRITICISM CAN AND SHOULD BE EXPECTED, AND IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO BE OPEN WITH CRITICS, AS TUNISIA HAD BEEN WITH VISITS FROM THE NGO HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH RECENTLY. TUNISIA COULD BEST BE SERVED BY ALLOWING VISITORS TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES ITS PROGRESS TO DATE, AND IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT. ISSUES OUAILI WOULD LIKE TO SEE DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT WORKING GROUP MEETING ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE TO BE HELD THIS MONTH INCLUDE: OPEN SOURCING, (I.E. PROMOTING FREE SOFTWARE,) AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH.
HUDSON